

REMARKS

Claims 7 and 8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(a) as being anticipated by the Applicant's acknowledged prior art.

Independent claim 7 has been deleted and replaced with new independent claim 9 to more clearly distinguish the present invention from the art of record. Specifically, claim 9 specifies, *"A fluid-filled elastomeric bladder assembly ... comprising: upper and lower interface panels formed of relatively thick, rigid material (and) ... a sheet of relatively thin elastomeric material disposed between said upper and lower interface panels and peripherally joined to one of said interface panels to form a closed bladder and defining a volume therebetween for filling with a fluid, said sheet of thin elastomeric material and the interface panel to which it is peripherally joined forming upper and lower load bearing surfaces ..."*.

The prior art depicted by the Applicants in Figure 1 of the present application illustrates a fluid filled bladder (20), which is encompassed by a thin upper sheet (20a) and thin lower sheet (20b).

Claim 8 has been amended to depend from new independent claim 9 and is similarly distinguishable from the art of record.

Accordingly, in view of the amendments, it is requested that the rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 2 – 4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Applicants acknowledged prior art in view of Gaither (U.S. 6,175,980).

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Response to Office Action of 10/06/2005

Claims 2 – 4 have been amended to depend, directly or indirectly, from new independent claim 9 and are distinguishable from the art of record for the reasons set forth herein above.

Accordingly, it is requested that the rejections be withdrawn.

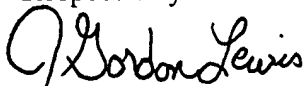
Conclusion

Applicants believe, in view of the amendments and remarks herein, that all grounds of rejection have been addressed and overcome, and that all claims are in condition for allowance.

If it would further prosecution of the application, the Examiner is urged to contact the undersigned at the telephone number provided.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees associated with this communication and/or credit any over payment to Deposit Account No.: 50-0831.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Gordon Lewis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

J. Gordon Lewis

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Dated: 15-FEB-2006